



**Testimony of Abraham Scarr, Director
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)**

in support of

Proposed Senate Bill No. 207 :

**An Act Requiring Home Improvement Contractors and Salesmen to Obtain and Display Identification Badges,
and No. 208:**

**An Act Concerning Pharmacy Rewards Programs and Protected Health Information,
and No. 209:**

An Act Prohibiting Unsolicited Commercial Text Messages and Increasing Penalties for Violations of the Do Not Call Registry.

Chairperson Doyle, Chairperson Baram and Members of the Committee: My name is Abe Scarr and I am the Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in support of Proposed Senate Bills No. 207, 208, and 209.

ConnPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer group. Our consumer program works to alert the public to hidden dangers and scams and to ban anti-consumer practices and unsafe products.

207: An Act Requiring Home Improvement Contractors and Salesmen to Obtain and Display Identification Badges

Home improvement contractors and salesmen are already required to obtain a certificate of registration with the Commissioner of Consumer Protection. This bill would require contractors and salesman to obtain and display a photo-identification badge when performing or attempting to sell home improvement services. The commissioner may charge a reasonable fee no greater than \$30 to issue a badge.

Unfortunately, some unscrupulous contractors take advantage of consumers. This simple reform will help good actors in the industry by doing more to root out scams and fraud. The fee is a reasonable expense for this protection.

208: An Act Concerning Pharmacy Rewards Programs and Protected Health Information

Data is currency in today's marketplace and, as we have recently witnessed, vast amounts of consumer data is at risk when companies do not take necessary steps to protect the consumer data they aggregate. Unfortunately, many consumers unwittingly sign away more access to their personal information than they realize in exchange for promotions and rewards programs.

Medical and Health information is particularly important to protect. This bill would increase consumer protections when signing up for pharmacy rewards programs by requiring that pharmacies give consumers plain language explanations of the terms and conditions of the program. If participating in the program requires HIPPA Authorization, the pharmacy must disclose that the consumer's personal

health information may no longer be protected by state and federal privacy laws. The pharmacy must also disclose, among other things, if the consumers personal health information be shared with third parties and instructions on how the consumer can revoke authorization.

209: An Act Prohibiting Unsolicited Commercial Text Messages and Increasing Penalties for Violations of the Do Not Call Registry.

As marketing practices change, so should consumer protections. Unsolicited text messages are more than a nuisance for consumers; they can also cost consumers money. This bill is a timely and important update to consumer protections from unsolicited sales and marketing. The bill also increases the maximum potential liability of solicitors who violate the law from \$11,000 to \$20,000 per violation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bills 207, 208, and 209.

Abe Scarr
860-233-7554
abe@connpirg.org